

The FMCA Municomm Toolkit

PART 2 MEDIA-MAKING



A comprehensive resource for
Florida municipal communicators

INTRODUCTION

As the communications field has evolved, so has your municipality's ability to communicate with its residents. Whether you are a one-person operation, part of a large team driving your city's message forward or somewhere in between, The FMCA Municomm Toolkit has something for every municipal communicator. This toolkit from the Florida Municipal Communicators Association (FMCA) was designed specifically for Public Information Officers (PIOs) and communications professionals in city halls throughout the Sunshine State. Part 2 of The FMCA Municomm Toolkit explores the elements of media-making - from graphic design to photography and videography to project management. The second installment of this comprehensive resource will help you and your team excel in your roles as municipal communicators.

Let The FMCA Municomm Toolkit Part 2 help ensure that you tell your community's story as creatively, seamlessly and successfully as possible.

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GRAPHIC DESIGN

Strong graphic design is critical to telling your city, town or village's story. A visually appealing image that is clear and consistent with your municipal brand can make a difference in communicating information with your residents and visitors.

WORKFLOW BASICS

FILE TYPES

Before design can begin, you need to know the size of your graphics and the file type of the final product. For example, do you need a JPG for a web image or a PNG for a cut-out design with a transparent background? Analyze what you'll need before you start so you can design accordingly.

Raster

Raster images are compiled using pixels, or tiny dots, containing unique color information that, when compiled, create a larger image.

The recommended minimum pixel size for web content is 72 ppi (pixels per inch) and 300 dpi (dots per inch) for print content. If unsure, pay attention to file size; the larger, the better. For print, the recommended size is 2 megabytes or higher.

- **JPG:** Commonly used method of glossy compression for digital images. The degree of compression can be adjusted, which allows a selectable tradeoff between storage size and image quality.
- **GIF:** Supports animation but is best suited for simpler images or graphics with solid areas of color.
- **PNG:** Commonly used for images with transparent backgrounds.

Vector

Vector files are best used when you want scalable graphics. You do not have to worry about resolution because these graphics do not use pixels. Rather, the lines and shapes of the graphic are mathematically calculated. You will always have a clear image, no matter how large or small you scale it. Vectors are best used for logos, icons, etc.

- **EPS:** Used for printing to PostScript printers and imagesetters. Professional printers often request your design files in EPS format so that the file is compatible with their software and printers. EPS files can be converted to JPG, PNG and PDF file formats.
- **SVG:** Can be scaled up or down without losing its resolution. Preferred file type for displaying 2D graphics on websites.
- **PDF:** Used when exchanging electronic documents. Any documents, forms, images and webpages encoded in the PDF format can be correctly displayed on any device.

COLOR PROFILES

Failing to understand the fundamental difference between RGB and CMYK can lead to color inconsistencies between your digital and print mock-ups.

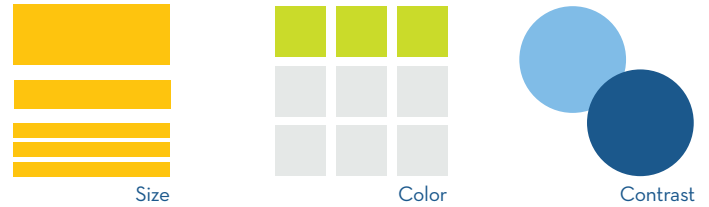
- **CMYK (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow, Key/Black):** This is the color model used for printed materials. Use a CMYK color profile for any project design that will be physically printed.
- **RGB (Red, Green, Blue):** This is the color model used for digital media. Whether it's your website, social media images or a piece of collateral that will be shared digitally, use the RGB color profile if your design is displayed on a screen.
- # **HEX:** A six-digit combination of letters and numbers used as a shortcode for RGB color. This system is used for HTML, CSS and SVG as a representation of how much red, green and blue exist in a color.
- **Grayscale:** A color model made up of 256 shades of gray. Best used for decreasing file size in black-and-white printing.

TIPS AND TRICKS

VISUAL HIERARCHY

Arrange elements to show their order of importance:

- **Size:** Users notice larger elements more easily.
- **Color:** Bright colors typically attract more attention.
- **Contrast:** Dramatic contrasting adds visual interest and emphasizes areas of importance.



CONSISTENCY

Ensure that images, graphics, diagrams and illustrations remain consistent throughout your design. A few characteristics to keep in mind:

- Quality
- Framing
- Style
- Proportions
- Color
- Lighting.

Ensuring that design elements remain consistent makes working with your visual brand easier over time and subconsciously **attracts** viewers because your materials and messaging are coherent.

READABILITY

Make your text easy to read by using headers, hierarchy and focus points to guide the user through the content.

- Type considerations:
 - **Size:** The smaller the font size, the more challenging it can be to read, especially when the audience consists of seniors, children or those with visual impairments.
 - **Case:** Words in all caps have a uniform rectangular shape, making word recognition slightly more difficult in lengthier text blocks. Use all caps for titles, headers or brief calls to action. Opt for bolded or italicized words in longer bodies of text to provide emphasis.
 - **Contrast and Color:** Make sure there is enough contrast between the type and its background. Sometimes blurring a background picture can improve overlaid text's readability.

You may come back to read this text ●

YOU WILL READ THESE LINES FIRST.

And then you will read this line.

You will read this body copy if you want to know more information about the topic. This text is generally smaller and utilizes tighter spacing. Most people will skip this paragraph unless there is a distinct visual hierarchy to engage them in the right way.

You will probably read this section before you begin the paragraph.

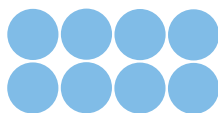
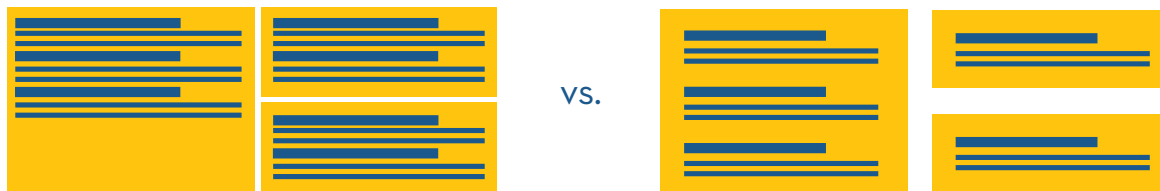
Tips and Tricks (continued)

HYPERLINKS

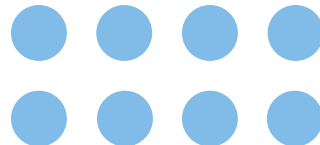
- Links are the most basic interactive component of a digital platform.
- Link styling is the most effective way to ensure clickable text stands out.
- While underlines and color are common ways to label hyperlinks, consider using visual cues such as large arrows and button-like shapes to emphasize links.

WHITE SPACE

- In content-heavy layouts, spacing helps define core ideas.
- White space, the area of space without text or elements on it, can help your layout “breathe.”
- As the saying goes, less is more. Sometimes, you don’t need to add many colors, elements or fonts to convey your message. When you use white space, you prevent your message from getting lost in the chaos and noise of your design.



VS.



BRANDING

- When developing your branding, creating a “brand guideline” is useful to help maintain a consistent look and feel for all materials and make it easier for others to follow your brand.
- When using other brand materials, check for a brand guideline containing the organization’s rules about using their brand.

RESOURCES

GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAMS

Advanced

From logo and illustration development to photo editing and web design, a robust graphic design software allows designers to leverage their time and creativity to produce high-quality visuals.



Adobe Creative Suite: adobe.com/creativecloud.html



A Graphic Designer's workspace, this suite of programs will fill all of your design needs and more.

Novice

If you do not have a background in design, here are some programs to help create graphics for any skill level:



Adobe Creative Cloud Express: adobe.com/express



Canva: canva.com



Setka Editor: setka.io



Design Wizard: designwizard.com



GIMP: gimp.org



Inkscape: inkscape.org



TIP: Save time with templates. Graphics need to be created constantly and regularly. Here are some websites with pre-designed templates for your graphic needs and brand management:



Canva: canva.com



PicMonkey: picmonkey.com



VistaCreate: create.vista.com



Visme: visme.com



Tutorials

These networks offer a range of materials and techniques to strengthen subject comprehension, boost confidence and build important design skills.



Skillshare: Free classes and tutorials. skillshare.com/browse/free-classes



Udemy.com: Free classes and tutorials. udemy.com/topic/graphic-design/free



CreativePro.com: Resource for video tutorials, templates and tips. creativepro.com/resources





VIDEO & PHOTOGRAPHY

TIPS & TRICKS BEHIND THE LENS

Visual elements can really drive home the messaging in your community. The improved quality of smartphone imaging allows you to snap an incredible photo or record a powerful moment with the device right in your hand. Below are tips to consider whether you're shooting your own content with a cellphone or a high-quality camera.

VIDEOS

LIGHTING

- Natural lighting is always ideal, or find the brightest room in your home or office.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

- Find a quiet spot, and be mindful of background noise, wind, etc.

VIDEO COMPOSITION

- Hold the phone horizontally in landscape mode if the video is recorded on a cellphone. An exception to the rule is if you're going to post your video as a story on social media, then go with portrait mode.
- Don't keep the camera so close that your face fills up the entire frame.
- If you're talking directly to your audience, look into the camera and position yourself in the center to create symmetry. If reading from a script, write it on a poster board, and place it behind the camera.
- If you're having a conversation with someone off-camera, keep the rule of thirds in mind: divide the screen into three vertical sections, and put your subject in the left or right third of the frame.
- Don't forget about the headroom. Typically, you don't want the top of your head to leave the frame.

WORK THOSE ANGLES

- Using a tripod with a smartphone clip is ideal, but you can use drawers, nightstands, shelves, books, decor, etc., to prop up your camera or phone so it's at the perfect angle.
- Keep your smartphone camera at eye level. The results will not do you justice if your device is looking up or down at you.



Photography Tips

- Always work with the highest quality photos you can find.
- Headshots should not be selfies. If possible, take on a high-quality camera with room to breathe around the face. This extra space will provide more options when cropping the photos for graphic use.
- Remember to focus on diversity when taking and selecting photos to reflect a real-world perspective.
- Try taking your own photos!
 - This approach will help avoid any potential confusion over source citation.
 - You can produce great, quality photos using most cameras and smartphones if you do not have access to a professional-grade camera lens.
 - Always make sure your camera is focused on an object.
 - Take several shots in a row to ensure you have options.
 - Pay attention to the light and shadows when taking photos. Keep the object you want to focus on facing your light source.

VIDEOS (continued)

USE THE BEST CAMERA AVAILABLE TO YOU.

- Pro tip: The back-facing camera on a cellphone is better.

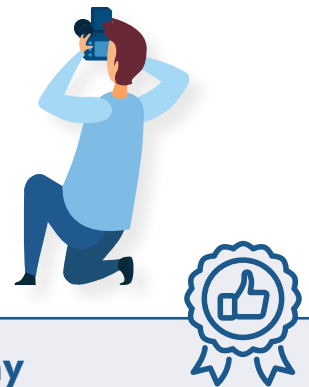
WHAT NOT TO WEAR

- Don't wear clothes that blend in with the background.
- Avoid patterns such as stripes.
- Don't wear a shiny outfit.
- Keep accessories such as jewelry to a minimum.
- Make sure your accessories don't interfere with the audio.

SPECS

- Resolution: Select either 1080 (Full HD) or 4K.
- Frame rate: Most videos are shot at the standard 30 fps (frames per second).
For smoother footage, you can select 60 fps.
- If you're not sure about these specs, then don't worry. The default setting should work just fine.

Sources: Maria Saif and MotionCue

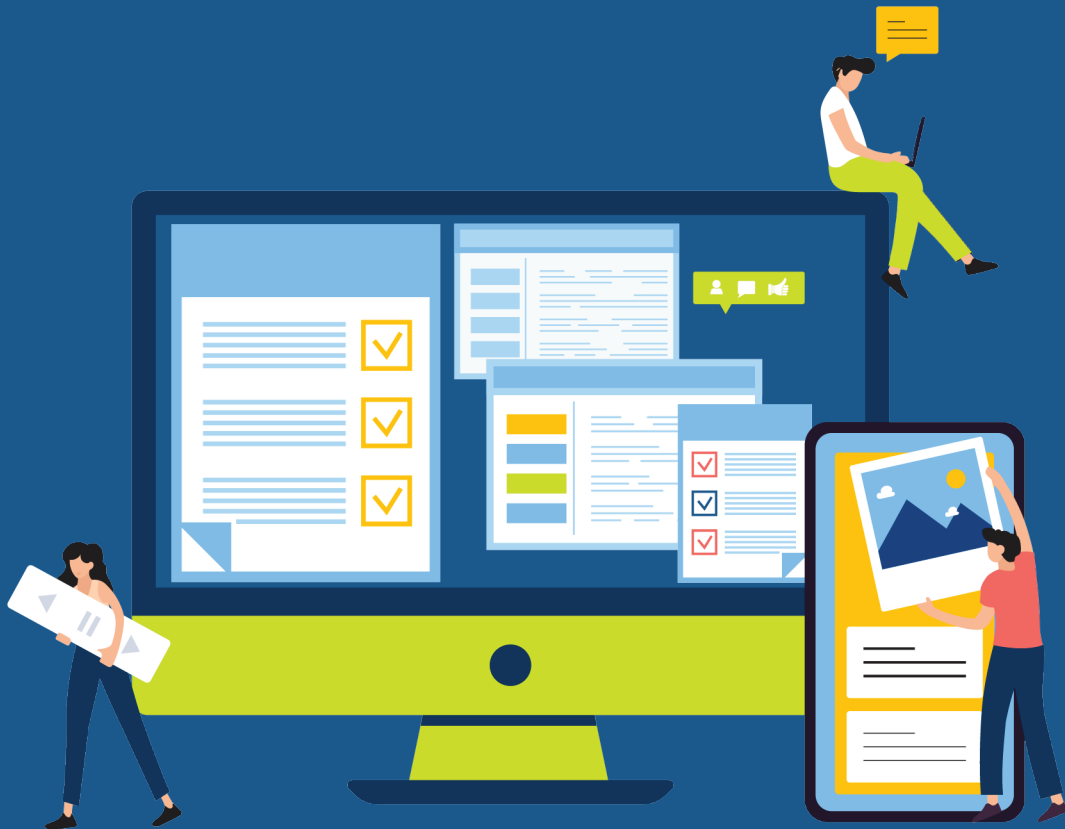


Click here for
**FLORIDA MEMORY
PROJECT**



Online Photography

- If you have specific photo or graphic needs and cannot produce them yourself, there are many stock photo and graphics websites available to download photos, vectors, video b-roll and music. Here are some that offer free downloads:
 - pixabay.com
 - commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
 - pexels.com
 - unsplash.com/s/photos/commercial-use
- Access free historical Florida photos: floridamemory.com/discover/photographs
- Remember to check to see if your sources are properly cited. Individual websites will provide specific rules about how to use their photos.
- Do not download and use content from Google Images unless permission to use is requested directly from the source.
- Rules about image use can also vary depending on how the photo is used. Check for “Creative” versus “Editorial only” when doing your image searches.



MUNICIPAL WEBSITE BEST PRACTICES

A website is an essential component of your city's communications strategy. It is a portal for government functions and a repository of vital information. Consider it your home base for news, resources and other updates for residents and visitors.

Unlike other forms of communication, you have complete control over the content and how your city is portrayed. Your website presents an opportunity to create an informed and connected community and showcase your city in a way that is consistent with your unique brand and quality of life.

Design and content are important elements of a functional and inviting municipal website. But there are other factors to consider, including management, functionality, statutorily mandated content, security and more.

DESIGN

When designing your website, try to think like a new city resident. What do they need to know? What services or resources would be most helpful? Are there commonly used forms or applications? What types of content will they access most frequently?

COLOR SCHEME

The colors on your website determine a visitor's first impression – in less than 90 seconds.

- Choose a simple palette of no more than four colors.
- Select colors that are representative of your city's brand (perhaps colors from the city seal/logo or colors that evoke associations with the area).

HOMEPAGE

Like a home, this page should be welcoming, inviting and popping with curb appeal!

- Keep it simple, and don't offer too many choices.
- Put the most recent and vital information at the top of the page. (Think news feeds, sliders or image blocks.)
- If you have a call to action, place it here.

NAVIGATION

Unlike consumer sites, visitors to your website are not shopping or browsing. They have questions, and they want answers.

- Avoid organizing menus departmentally. While you are familiar with the structure of your city government, most citizens are not.
- Use basic phrases such as "Home," "Events" or "Contact" as menu titles to minimize confusion.
- Create easy access to commonly requested forms, applications and other service requests.
- Use the three-click rule: Users should never have to click more than three times to access what they need.
- Always include a search feature so users can search by keywords.

MOBILE OPTIMIZATION

Most people now access the internet on their phones or other mobile devices instead of a desktop computer. You will lose visitors if your website does not look good on these devices.

- Choosing a responsive theme is the easiest way to ensure your website is mobile-friendly. Most themes now include mobile responsiveness as a standard feature.
- A simple navigation system with short menu options displays better on mobile devices.
- Avoid small buttons that may be difficult to click on a smaller screen.
- Be aware of the placement of clickable items, as they may end up in trapped corners or behind other content when optimized.
- Don't use pop-ups! They can be very difficult to close and will likely not display correctly on mobile devices.



CONTENT

Internet usage has moved toward mobile viewing, and the preferred type of content has shifted. This preference includes the amount of content and the file formats, as mobile users often have bandwidth and data-downloading limitations.

TEXT

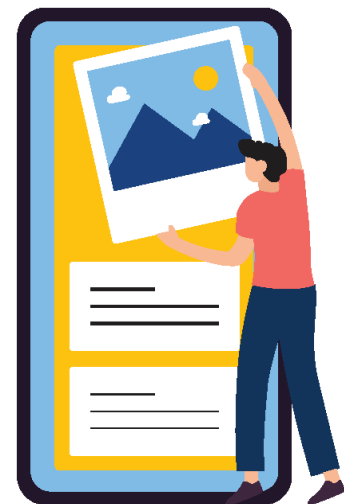
Local government information is often technical and may confuse readers unfamiliar with specific terms and phrases. For maximum readability, all content should be written at an eighth-grade level.

- Less is more. Keep text to a minimum on the homepage and main landing pages.
- Use short sentences and short paragraphs.
- Use lists whenever possible.
- Avoid obscure words or government jargon.
- Make sure the font on your website is easy to read. Popular sans-serif fonts include Open Sans, Montserrat, Helvetica and Merriweather.

IMAGES

One of the newest catchphrases in web design is “show, don’t tell.” Visual cues can help get your point across and draw users to where they need to look on a page.

- Use images to illustrate topics on pages and break up long blocks of text.
- Source local images and use them before looking for stock photography.
- Paint a picture of your community using images that evoke emotions associated with your city’s geography, history, landmarks and attractions.
- Incorporate photos of faces whenever possible to add a human touch.
- Be inclusive. Diversity in photography is crucial. All communications are more relatable when an audience feels their culture and community are represented.
- Size matters, especially when it comes to mobile responsiveness. Be sure to size all photos properly to the specific needs of your web template.
- Optimize photos for web display. Web images typically display best at 72 dpi resolution. Larger, high-resolution photos can take much longer to load and bog down your site.

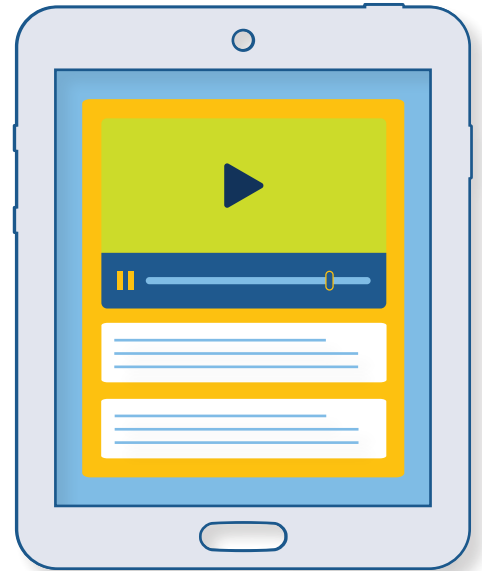


CONTENT (continued)

VIDEOS

People have short attention spans and are used to scrolling through content until something catches their eye. Videos are a great way to share information on your website engagingly and quickly.

- Use videos sparingly for your most important announcements, programs and events. Like most content, if it is everywhere, it tends to blend into the background and not get noticed.
- Format correctly. The .MP4 format is the industry standard for video files and is supported by most browsers.
- Video files can be huge and significantly reduce loading speed. Hosting videos on platforms like YouTube or Vimeo and linking to them from your site allows for quick viewing and for your video to be posted on multiple platforms simultaneously.
- Keep them short. Like a TV or radio commercial, 30-60 seconds is ideal for home and landing pages and no longer than three minutes for in-depth topics.
- Say no to autoplay on videos with sound! Autoplaying will make users quickly abandon your page, and some browsers may not play videos that are not set to mute.
- Include captions for better accessibility. Visit flcities.com/ada-website-compliance to learn more about captions and accessibility.



Web Requirements



Content Mandated by Florida Statutes

Florida Statutes require municipalities to post specified information on municipal websites (if the city has a website). Visit flcities.com/ada-website-compliance for a list of the required information. Review each statutory reference to determine the specific requirements for each post. Consult your City Attorney with any questions.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

The Americans with Disabilities Act was instituted in 1990 to discourage discrimination based on differing abilities. ADA compliance means all electronic information and technology, including websites, must be accessible to those with disabilities.

The Web Content Accessibility Guideline (WCAG) is an internationally recognized set of guidelines for digital accessibility. Established and managed by the international web standards group, the W3C, WCAG is the working standard for digital accessibility in the United States and Canada. To learn more about ADA compliance, visit flcities.com/ada-website-compliance and consult the list of resources.



PROJECT MANAGEMENT

As the communications industry has evolved, so has your ability to communicate with your city's residents. While digital media has expanded how you can communicate and offered tons of channels to do so, it has also added to your workload.

Time, resources, budget and staff are challenges for small and large teams. Whether you're a mighty team of one or a large department with many staff, overseeing workflow is essential for success. Project management helps you reach your project's goal by assisting with planning, organization, execution, monitoring and delivery.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Several free and affordable project management tools can help you or your department increase productivity, enhance collaboration and manage projects and calendars. Below are a few tools available to help individuals and teams manage workflow. While each tool may not work for every municipality, they offer unique benefits based on your specific needs.

ASANA

asana.com

Ideal for managing and assigning tasks, the basic plan is free for individuals and teams, while paid plans ranging from \$10-\$30 per month offer additional features.

Level 1: FREE

Level 2: \$10-\$30 per month

COSCHEDULE

coschedule.com

Built for communicators managing multiple projects, this marketing calendar is free for the basic plan and offers a pro plan at \$29 per month.

Level 1: FREE

Level 2: \$29 per month

HIVE

hive.com

Great for marketing campaigns, Hive Solo is free for two users, and Hive Teams is \$12 per month for unlimited users and additional features.

Level 1: FREE

Level 2: \$12 per month

MONDAY.COM

monday.com

Perfect for streamlining your work for maximum productivity and clear communication among your team members. The individual level is completely free if you are a shop of one. After that, plans range from \$24-\$48 per month.

Level 1: FREE

Level 2: \$24-\$48 per month

TOGGL PLAN

toggl.com/plan/index

Made for small teams, this simple yet comprehensive planner helps you visualize and balance your team's workload for \$9 per month.

Level 2: \$9 per month

TRELLO

trello.com

Best for visualizing your workflow on a board, the basic plan is free for your team, with paid plans available at \$5 and \$10 per month.

Level 1: FREE

Level 2: \$5-\$10 per month

For more information on project management, read CoSchedule's e-book, "The Non-Project Manager's Guide to Marketing Project Management," at bit.ly/3JJ2Van.



Florida Municipal Communicators Association

Connect with the Florida
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@FMCAonline

